Digital Reformatting as Memory Practice: Reflections on Digitizing a Personal Audiovisual Collection

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The collection

- VHS Tapes (1985-2000): 22 tapes
- miniDV Tapes (2003-2014): 50 tapes
- super8 Films (2008-2015): 2550 ft. (16 reels)
- 8mm films (in California) (1950s-1960s): estimated 12 reels
- 16mm Films (2005-2013): 1600 ft. (4 reels)
- 1/2” Open Reel Audio Tape: 1 (4 track)
- 1/4” Open Reel Audio Tape: 10 (4 track)
- Audio Cassettes: 113 (2-track stereo = 8; 4 track = 105)

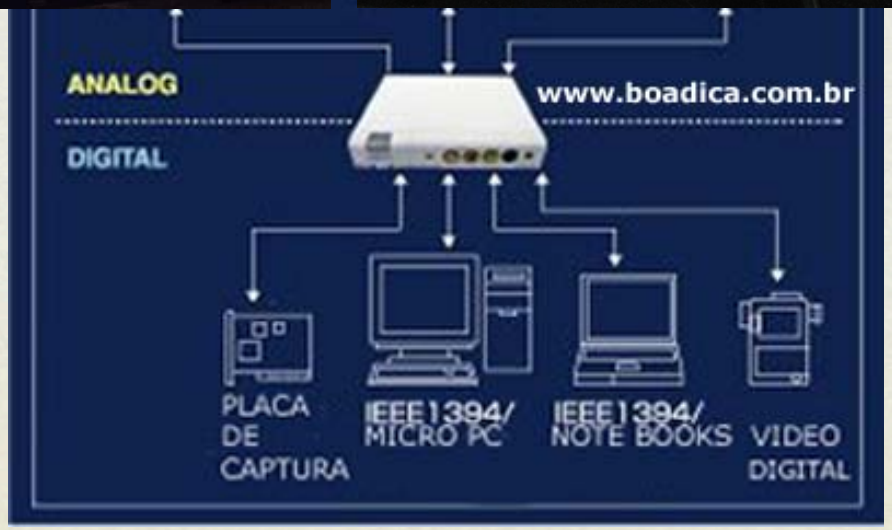
FUJI
Joshua Thompson - Senior Show
Project #1: Soy la muchacha
maxell
VIDEO CASSETTE
Los Cigarillos - "This Isn't Real"
TDK
Scotch
PHG
maxell
P/T
PLUS
T-120
RCA
A/V PRO
SHA

technology

- VHS VCR (Samsung SV-5000W)
- Analog to Digital Converter (Canopus ADVC 300 w/ software)
- Broadcast Monitor (Panasonic CT 1384 Y)
- Computer: MacBook Pro (2.53 GHz, 4 GB RAM, OSX 10.6.8)
- Final Cut Pro 7.0
- Headphones (Sennheiser, HD 280 Pro)
- Cables (2 Shielded composite video, 1 stereo audio, Firewire 800 and Firewire 400 cables)
- Harddrive (LaCie, 500 GB, 7200 RPM, Firewire 800)

Panasonic

ADVC-300
canopus
World Wide Video
DIGITAL SYSTEM CONVERSION - WORLD TV SIGNAL RECEIVER - DIGITAL SPECIAL EFFECTS
SV-5000W SQPB


ANALOG
DIGITAL
www.boadica.com.br
PLACA DE CAPTURA
IEEE1394/ MICRO PC
IEEE1394/ NOTE BOOKS
VIDEO DIGITAL

Workflow

1. Inspect tapes for damage and to get any information off labels
2. Catalog tape (Filemaker 7 database)
3. Clean tapes if necessary
4. Clean tape path; playback tape on VHS deck
5. Digital Capture: VHS deck>A/D Converter>Computer
6. Studio monitor and headphones: Monitor capture for playback problems (sound and image)
7. Export files and produce checksums; mirror on local harddrive

Storage

- **Files:**
  - Current Conditions: Mirrored on two harddrives, in two locations. Access DVD copies are in three locations.
  - Ideal Conditions: RAID or Drobo system with automated monitoring of file integrity (maybe use AVPS's fixity? http://www.avpreserve.com/tools/fixity/).
- **Tapes:**
  - Current Conditions: not ideal: In archival boxes in my home office (temp fluctuates from 63 in winter to 80 in summer).

Aesthetics of Copying

QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Memory and documents

- The degradation of the image contributes to our experience of the recorded past as memory
- The visual artifacts from earlier instances of copying are documents of the tapes history of circulation and consumption(parents sharing/copying VHS tapes).
- This process of reformatting inspired me to experiment with the transfer process itself and see what sort of aesthetic expression it might afford.

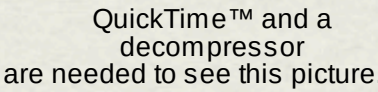
Print Generation

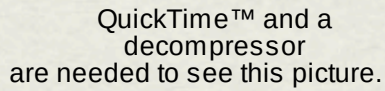
- J. J. Murphy (1974)
- (http://pica.org/event/jj-murphy/)

Print Generation

Beach decay

QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.


QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.


QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Sheep

QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Future Directions

- 8mm Films stored in California (1950s-1960s) Needs voiceover narration.
- Kodachrome Stereo slides (1960s) How to make accessible?

Conclusion

- Practices of digital reformatting can have emotional and aesthetic dimensions.
- Digitization is not just a technical procedure but becomes embedded in other cultural practices.
- Technical solutions should facilitate existing memory practices and creative experimentation.
- Engaging family members in the project is essential for long-term sustainability of collection.

thank you

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